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A TRIBUTE IN HONOR OF THE SALESIAN SISTERS OF ST. JOHN BOSCO ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR 100 YEARS OF SERVICE TO YOUTH IN THE UNITED STATES

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco for their 100 years of dedicated service to young people across the country, and particularly in our communities of Boyle Heights, Bellflower and Bell Gardens in the 34th Congressional District of California.

The Salesian Sisters, also known as the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, were founded by one of the great Italian educators of the 19th century, Saint John Bosco, with the collaboration of Saint Mary Domenica Mazzarello. During that time, Northern Italy was becoming increasingly industrialized and both of these religious leaders recognized the great need to establish schools for the disadvantaged, as well as the many abandoned youth in working class communities.

The history of the Salesian Sisters in this country begins in July of 1908 when four Sisters made the voyage from Northern Italy to the United States, setting out to replicate the good work they had accomplished in Italy. Like millions of others who emigrated to our shores at that time, the Sisters arrived at Ellis Island in the port of New York. Knowing no English and with limited resources, these pioneering women made a living taking in orders of sewing and embroidery while ministering to the Italian immigrants at St. Michael's parish in Paterson, New Jersey.

Gradually, the Sisters began to broaden their work in this country by opening an orphanage and a small school. As more and more young women joined the Sisterhood, the reach of their mission expanded to New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Florida. In time, the Sisters opened centers in other parts of the country, including Louisiana, Texas, Colorado, Arizona, and California.

In 1921, the first Salesian Sisters arrived in California where they took over the care of an orphanage and, later, the care of the boys in the junior seminary operated by the Salesian Fathers and Brothers in the Central Coast area of California. They eventually established several schools throughout the state, and in 1950, the Sisters

opened St. Margaret Mary School in Lomita in Southern California.

In the 34th Congressional District, the first educational center established by the Sisters was St. Dominic Savio School in Bellflower, opened in 1956. By 1960, the nearby aerospace plant employed thousands of workers – many of them school parents – and the school population was at a maximum. When the plant closed, many families relocated. The local population was replaced by different ethnic groups, making the area today one of the most diverse in the United States. The school adapted well to the demographic changes, and continues to thrive today serving the spiritual and educational needs of the community.

Another school in the 34th District administered by the Salesian Sisters is St. Mary's Catholic School in Boyle Heights. St. Mary's was established in 1907 by the Holy Name Sisters. During that time, Boyle Heights became highly industrialized and many people moved in from various countries seeking new opportunities. After World War II, much of the non-Latino population moved to outlying areas, and the community became increasingly populated by Mexican immigrants. By 1990, school enrollment at St. Mary's dropped significantly and the Holy Name Sisters could no longer provide personnel for the school. The Salesian Sisters were then asked to take over the school, and they have been there to this day.

The Salesian Sisters also operated St. Gertrude's School in Bell Gardens in the 34th District for 30 years.

Madam Speaker, on a personal note, I attended St. Mary's Catholic School prior to the coming of the Salesian Sisters, and I am very pleased the school continues to serve local youth today under the Sisters' devoted guidance. I might also add that my father, the late Congressman Edward R. Roybal, was a committed supporter of Salesian schools. He was instrumental in helping establish the Bishop Mora Salesian High School for young men in Boyle Heights, which many area boys attend today following their 8th grade graduation from St. Mary's.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to please join me in honoring the noble mission of the Salesian Sisters in the United States in educating our youth over the past 100 years, and I extend to all of them my fondest wishes for many more years of dedicated service.